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PROGRAM



*A guide for
novice school districts*

All school districts in Missouri are required to provide equal educational opportunities to students regardless of their race, national origin, sex, color or disabilities. Highly qualified teachers are needed in schools to implement programs ensuring that all children meet Missouri's academic content and achievement standards. To have access to school programs, English Language Learners (ELL), including immigrant children and youth, refugees, migrants and undocumented students, must receive instruction that increases their English proficiency and core academic content knowledge. Suitable instruction involves the application of rigorous, systemic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities and programs. This is important to the success of the student. ELL students cannot be retained solely because of language barriers. Grades represent what the student understands about the subject matter, not the level of the English language proficiency.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
D. Kent King, Commissioner of Education



PROGRAM STEPS

➤ WHERE TO BEGIN?

All school districts in Missouri are required to have a plan or a policy to systematically identify ELL students. They also must have an assessment tool to assess the language ability of these students in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The alternative to buying this tool in advance when there are no ELL students in the district is to have in place a written agreement with another district to borrow their testing tool when the first ELL student is identified. Districts with at least one ELL student are encouraged to have their own testing tool right after identification.

➤ HOW TO IDENTIFY ELL STUDENTS?

School districts must establish procedures to identify ELL students. Procedures may include a language survey or at least two questions in the school enrollment form. The language survey can be found at mo-mell.org/resources. Suggested questions in the enrollment form include:

1. Do you use a language other than English?
2. Is a language other than English used in your home?

➤ DOES A “YES” MEAN AN ELL STUDENT NEEDS SERVICES?

The answer “yes” is only a prompt for further investigation. The district must follow-up with a language survey and administer an assessment to identify the ELL students’ skills in the four domains, which are reading, writing, speaking and listening. ELL students should be placed at an age-appropriate grade level. Under serious consideration, it is possible to place an ELL student only one grade level below. A program must be designed to improve the students’ English proficiency when services are required.

➤ WHAT SHOULD FOLLOW THE IDENTIFICATION OF AN ELL STUDENT?

Schools are required to provide informed parental notification as to why their child is in need of placement in a specialized language-instruction program. Parents have the right to choose among instruction programs if more than one type of program is offered. Parents must be informed no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year. If a child enters a program during the school year, the time frame is two weeks. Parents also have the right to immediately remove their child from a program for ELL children. When they remove their child from the language program, schools are advised to file a written agreement. Schools must also notify parents of any failure of the program to make progress on the annual measurable objectives no later than 30 days after this failure occurs. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) does not require the districts to seek parental authorization to test the children for ELL classification. A suggestion is to notify parents the first year their child moves to a monitoring status and when the child is no longer receiving services.

➤ WHAT SHOULD BE THE PROGRAM CONTEXT?

Developing a program should allow local variations. Districts should consider local characteristics in terms of demographics, ethnic and language diversity, district size, ELL population, student enrollment — what is unique to the districts. The ELL students’ results in terms of language abilities are also key factors in determining what kind of services to

provide and how often to deliver programs that enable children to speak, write, listen, read and comprehend the English language and meet the challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

➤ **WHAT SHOULD BE THE PROGRAM GOALS AND COMPONENTS?**

The purpose of Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is to implement language instruction to develop the English language proficiency that ELL students need to meet the same academic content and achievement standards that other children are expected to meet. This aim must be tied to the districts Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) that describes strategies and how local resources are to be put forward to deliver the curriculum. A curriculum that must be adjusted or modified to enable children to read, write, listen, speak and comprehend English language and meet the state ELL standards aligned with the Show-Me Standards. The minimum program components would be the service goals, service delivery methods or implementation strategies, service monitoring and service evaluation. Definition of terms may help in understanding the content.

➤ **WHAT WOULD BE THE PROGRAM APPROACH?**

An ELL program must be consistent with sound research-based educational theories for the purpose of attaining English language proficiency. District personnel working with ELL students must familiarize themselves with the *Educating Linguistically Diverse Students* handbook found on the MELL Web site at mo-mell.org/resources. Models described in this handbook will assist in terms of best practices suitable to your local context. ELL students need special language support that target curriculum modification strategies and techniques.

➤ **WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT THE ELL PROGRAM?**

School districts are required to hire highly qualified teachers to ensure quality instruction. The local context will again determine whether a school needs an aide-teacher under the supervision of a certified teacher, or a full-time ESOL-endorsed teacher. The ELL coordinator and the program implementer must work closely to address the ELL students' needs. District enrolling 20 or more ELL students must hire a full-time ESOL-endorsed teacher. When enrolling more than 20 ELL students, the districts must strictly follow their local students/teachers ratio. All students needing services must be included in the program. There should not be a waiting list of ELL students in a district. General considerations on class size can be found on the DESE Web site at dese.mo.gov/divimprove/sia/msip/faq&answers. Districts hiring classroom aide-teachers must be prepared to hire ESOL-endorsed teachers as soon as they reach 20 students. An aide-teacher can be supported to meet the credentials leading to endorsement with Title III or other local funds.

➤ **WHAT WOULD MAKE AN ELL PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL?**

Professional development programs are available at mo-mell.org or ask an instructional specialist for technical assistance in local capacity building. The success of a program may be tied to how often the districts evaluate their program and address weaknesses. Continuing education of the program personnel could be helpful in bringing in new and fresh ideas. Talking to experienced neighboring districts could be the best move.

➤ **HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE ELL PROGRAM?**

Ongoing measures of program effectiveness through pre-established indicators will allow adjusting, adapting and improving ELL services. Pre- and Post-testing could allow comparing results to determine students' performance. While designing a program, educators must keep in mind an evaluation plan that would chart accomplishments. Generally asked questions include: What kind of instrument will be used? Who should be tested? When or how often to test (e.g., beginning of year, midyear or end of year)? How to go about it or what kind of data to collect? What kind of analysis to conduct? These questions can help in developing an evaluation device. Relying on local data will allow a timely address of weaknesses. Accomplishments must be backed by readily available strong data.

➤ **WHERE CAN A DISTRICT GET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?**

The best document to consult is the *Educating Linguistically Diverse Students* handbook. Missouri Migrant Education and English Language Learning (MELL) program is designed by DESE to provide school districts with the help they need to build local capacity and to improve ELL services as outlined under the NCLB Act. Visit MELL Web site at www.mo-mell.org to locate the nearest technical assistant. Also, visit the Web site for St Louis Public Schools at: www.slps.org/esol that provides translated forms for districts to use. You may also contact a high incidence school district, such as the Kansas City School District, to seek help with their translated forms. School districts are encouraged to share their experiences and their translated forms with the MELL program staff and other school districts' educators.

To comply with MSIP requirements, all school districts in Missouri must have in place an ELL policy or plan and an ELL assessment tool. A plan or policy in this context does not contain enough information to be called a program. An instructional ELL program addresses specific needs through a methodic course of action stated to allow ELL students to acquire expected English language proficiency. ELL students are expected to acquire English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and comprehension that will enable them to meet the challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. An ongoing evaluation will allow program improvement.



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